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ABSTRACT

New efforts need to be made, the author contends, by nonschool organizations as well as schools and colleges, in order to meet the challenges of community and adult education. These efforts range from serving the needs of the professional for continuing education to the basic education needs of low income and/or illiterate adults. Viewing lifelong learning as an organizational principle, a two-part typology of sources of education and learning (labeled deliberate education and learning and unintentional learning) is set forth. A subcategory of deliberate education, individually used sources, is hypothesized to account for nearly all of the 80% of adult learners engaged in "do it yourself" or independent learning identified in surveys conducted by Tough (1971) and Penland (1977). Among ten challenges proposed for the 1980's are the establishment of educational brokering agencies, the facilitation of independent learning and unintentional learning, the use of volunteers (especially the elderly) in all phases of the educational process, and seeking expanded roles for churches. Colleges are challenged to assume the leadership role in forming Community Lifelong Learning Councils, which would plan and coordinate activities designed to meet diverse learning needs in communities. (MEK)

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LIFELONG LEARNING: SOME CHALLENGES OF THE 1980'S*

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I will try to do about five things in this paper. First I will say a few words about what the term lifelong learning might mean, or perhaps more aptly, what it means to me. Second, a general schema for thinking about the totality of education and learning in the U.S. will be briefly set forth. Third, and this will account for about two-thirds of the paper, I will comment on some ten needs or challenges of the 1980's to the expanding lifelong learning movement in this country. Then an organizational mechanism for facilitating lifelong learning in local communities will be described. And finally, I will end with some words of inspiration for any converts to the cause I have managed to make.

On the Meaning of Lifelong Learning

Much indeed has been written about how we should understand "lifelong learning," both by Americans and particularly by theorists based in Europe, where there has been serious thinking about lifelong learning and related concepts for almost two decades now. After musing over many of these definitions for quite a good while, I ended up saying the following (Peterson and Associates, 1979):

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First, I asserted that, "Lifelong learning is a conceptual framework for conceiving, planning, implementing, and coordinating activities designed to facilitate learning by all Americans throughout their lifetimes."

Second, I emphasized three basic "lifelong learning concepts," which are: (1) "there should be coordinated learning opportunities for people of all ages," (2) "all manner of organizations — school and nonschool — should take part in facilitating learning;" and (3) the community (or city or metropolitan region) should be the locus for planning and conducting learning activities (rather than the state of federal level).

Third, taking the lead from some very provocative reports from UNESCO, I endorsed the view of lifelong learning as a "master concept." On this last, fragments from two of the key UNESCO reports read as follows:

> "We propose lifelong learning as the master concept for educational policies in the years to come...The lifelong concept covers all aspects of education... Lifelong education is not an educational system but the principle on which the overall organization of the system is founded" (Faure and others, 1972, p. 182).
>
> And
>
> "The term 'lifelong education and learning,'...denotes an overall scheme aimed at both restructuring the existing educational system and at developing the entire educational potential outside the education system" (UNESCO, 1976, p. 2).

The Present Scope of Education and Learning in the United States

As part of our 1977-78 study of lifelong learning activities in the U.S., sponsored by the Exxon Foundation, I attempted to set forth a typology of what I called "sources of education and learning." As you can see in Table 1, the major division in the typology is between "deliberate education and learning," on the one hand, and "unintentional learning," on the other. The "deliberate" category is further divided among three types: "schools," "nonschool organization," and "individually used sources."

Most of the entries in the table will be more or less familiar, except for the category of "Individually Used Sources." These learning sources stem from the fact that the overwhelming majority of adults (in America) engage in independent or "do-it-yourself" learning rather continuously. The "facts" referred to here come from a line of research begun by Allen Tough, of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Using an elaborate interview schedule, Tough, (1971), and others since, have found that almost all adults carry out what Tough calls "learning projects," mostly short-term, in a given year. In 1976, a national poll in the U.S. by a reputable firm, using slight modifications of Tough's questions on a well-selected sample, found that 80 percent of adults had carried out "learning projects" during the previous year (Penland, 1977).

Back to the table, "Personal—at hand" includes, for example, experts who might be paid for providing information, experts who are friends or relatives, and tutors. "Personal—at a distance" includes correspondence study, and what have been called "networks"

Table 1

Sources of Education and Learning in the USA

Deliberate Education and Learning

	Approximate Number of Participants (in millions)
I. In the Schools	
A. Pre-primary education	10.0
B. Elementary and secondary education	42.0
C. College and university undergraduate education	9.5
D. Graduate and professional education	1.5
E. Public school adult education	1.8
F. Proprietary schools	1.2
G. College and university extension and continuing education	3.3
H. Community education	.5
II. In Non-School Organizations	
A. Private industry	5.8
B. Professional associations	5.5
C. Trade unions	.6
D. Government service	3.0
E. Federal manpower programs	1.7
F. Military services	1.5
G. Agriculture extension	12.0
H. City recreation departments	5.0
I. Community organizations	7.4
J. Churches and synagogues	3.3
K. Free universities	.2
L. Parks and forests	no meaningful estimate
III. Individually Used Sources	
A. Personal–at hand	
B. Personal–at distance	
C. Travel	
D. Print media	
E. Electronic media	

Unintentional Learning

I. In the Home
II. At Work
III. From Friends
IV. From the Mass Media
V. Other Sources

Source: Peterson and Associates (1979)

through which individuals interested in some topic stay in touch with each other through newsletters and other letter-writing.

I will say some things about unintentional learning, which occurs pretty much simply by living, toward the end. Suffice it to say that the domain of unintentional learning, so far as I know, has not been a subject for detailed conceptual analysis. The four sources indicated--home, work, friends, the mass media--derive mostly from common sense.

With regard to estimated numbers of participants (and indeed all the figures in the table must be viewed as estimates, rather than correct counts), there are on the order of 116 million deliberate learners (of all ages) in organizational settings in the United States. This amounts to a little over 50 percent of the total population. (If one takes into consideration double- or multiple-counting, participation by one individual in more than one source, the percentage drops a bit--to a figure perhaps closer to 50 percent.)

Looking at the post-compulsory level only, there are an estimated 64 million participants: roughly 18 million (28 percent) are enrolled in schools and colleges, compared to 46 million (72 percent) learning through nonschool organizations. All of these figures are "head count" estimates, and comparisons of the relative size of the school and nonschool sectors are not simple. Yet it is clear that many more people participate in the nonschool sector; typically, however, they are employed adults who are studying very much in a part-time manner.

After an inexact adjustment for multiple counting, we may use the figure 60 million as a rough estimate of the total number of adult

learners in the United States. This figure represents 39 percent of the nation's adult population (155 million in 1978). I like to compare it with a 32 percent figure from a 1972 survey of a random sample of U.S. adults (Carp, Peterson, and Roelfs, 1974).

Challenges for the 1980's

The 1980's, it seems to me, will be a decade both for meeting needs that emerged during the 1970's, and hopefully for moving in some entirely new directions. Despite all the commiserating about retrenchment and decline, it could--indeed should--be a time for pioneers. The ten challenges for the 80's I want to discuss would call for new efforts by nonschool organizations, such as churches, as well as by schools and colleges. The first three or so will be familiar; they reflect trends that are well underway, but which nonetheless call for higher levels of service. The last seven range from the somewhat obvious, though difficult to achieve, to the thoroughly utopian--and maybe impossible to achieve. Yet all of them, I would argue, deserve our attention if we are serious about lifelong learning.

(1) Serving the older student. Let's start with the obvious. As we all know, there will be many fewer children and youth for the next fifteen years or so; and there will also be many more adults. One appropriate response from the elementary and secondary schools, should be to adopt community education concepts; the schools should make their facilities available during the evening and the day for all manner of community-responsive learning activities. Funds for this purpose are available under the federal Community Schools Act of 1974.

What about the colleges and universities? Many, of course, particularly the community colleges with their essentially open admissions, have moved rather well in the past decade to accommodate older students. Four-year institutions generally have been slower, though there are many outstanding exceptions (as one may surmise from the ads for continuing education programs, say, in the New York Times). Thus many of the senior colleges, for example, have expanded their evening programs, set up external degrees, established special programs for returning women, and allow fee reductions for senior citizens. But few four-year institutions, it seems to me, have made a truly comprehensive commitment to lifelong learning. What might such commitment mean? It would mean, I here assert, a fundamental reorientation of the institution--embracing attitudes of staff as well as a great many campus policies and practices--in order that older adults may receive educational services of a quality similar to these received by younger adults.

More specifically, it could mean new curriculums--many of them for the purpose of job entry or advancement. It would mean scheduling classes in the evening, late afternoon, yes, even on Fridays and week-ends. It would mean opening up day classes to adults and part-time students, without penalty of any kind. Registration and other administrative procedures affecting students would need to be simplified and otherwise made more humane. Indeed, the college could even do away with distinctions such as "day" and "evening" divisions and "regular" vs. "adult" students or "full-" and "part-time" students. The campus would be operating from 8 AM until 10 PM,

with one faculty undivided, and one student body unsegregated by age or anything else. College operations, in effect, would be age neutral.

(2) Meeting subject matter needs. In general, but particularly at public colleges, the curriculum should reflect learning interests of student applicatants, of residents in the community at large, and to some extent the employment needs of major employers in the area. Lets fact it: College graduates these days, and in the foreseeable future, men and women, do want jobs. All the surveys of adults--and there are more than 40 recent state and national ones--are reasonably consistent in showing that roughly half of all adults are in school for vocational career reasons. Certainly the entry of women into the work force, and the training often required, are among the most significant social and educational realities of the times.

There are obviously many other curriculum design considerations. For example, women who dropped out of college to raise families wish to return to complete their degrees, often in the liberal arts. In quite a different vein, roughly one-fourth of adults, the surveys also "show", are enrolled in essentially recreational or avocational courses--conceivably as an antidote to dull work-lives or as a bi-product of retirement; the demand for such classes very likely will increase during the 1980's.

Colleges and universities, especially public ones, will be well advised not to promulgate "missions" in terms of such shibboleths as "building on strength" with "strength" usually meaning concentrations of faculty with particularly kinds of expertise. They would do better to systematically study learning interests in their applicant pools and educational needs

in the surrounding communities--and then design the curriculum. And yes, there may, indeed be a place for required general education.

(3) Continuing education for professionals. Again, as most of us know, professionals of all kinds are being called upon to maintain a high level of competency. No one wants an appendix removed sloppily, or a prescription filled erroneously, or a bridge designed that won't hold. Some of the professional associations have for years understood the need for continuing education for their members. And universities--usually their extension divisions--have cooperated by offering the courses. But surgeons still make mistakes and bridges still collapse. The pressure is now on in state legislatures to mandate continuing education and periodic relicensure. And the extension divisions, and other organizations that provide training, continue to do a thriving business--in aggressive competition with each other in many localities.

However, numerous observers are now observing that mere completion or a course of two every three years or so will not guarantee competency. The call begining to be heard now is that professionals need to demonstrate their skill every so often--in some kind of an assessment situation. Professionals will still rely to some extent on traditional courses to upgrade their skills, but they will increasingly rely on other, less formal, methods, such as audio-visual tapes and other self-teaching strategies.

(4) Attracting low-income people. Programs must be designed, and financing somehow secured, so that economically disadvantaged

people will be attracted to them. It is absolutely clear, from all those 40 surveys, that the total adult education outlay, nationally and in the states, is grossly biased in favor of the priviledged classes. There is a "tradition" in this country that adult students must pay their own way: thus, for example, extension divisions are self-supporting (rather than publicly supported), part-time students have not been eligible for financial aid, and so forth. Probably just as important as financial reasons in explaining the low rate of participation of poor people are their feelings about schools as they understand them, which feelings certainly must often stem from earlier experiences of failure in school.

At any rate, future comprehensive lifelong learning programs will be highly vulnerable politically unless low-income people are represented in at least their proportions in the surrounding area. Inasmuch as social equity is a general federal policy objective, there are a fair number of sources of federal funds for learning activities for low-income adults.

(5) Establishing educational brokering agencies. A relatively new concept, brokering agencies, as they are called, function as a means for linking an individual learner, with his unique set of interests and abilities, to a set of learning opportunities that best meets his needs. Brokering services commonly include providing information about various learning options in the community, individual assessment, counseling, and advocacy (this last meaning active aid to the potential student in pursuing his goals).

Such brokering services must be neutral with regard to the various colleges and other educational providers in the locality. That is, they cannot operate as recruiting agencies for particular institutions; they must operate first and foremost in the interests of individual learners. A good many brokering units got started with grants from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. For the past two years, federal funds in modest amounts have been available to states to plan and then implement statewide networks of Educational Information Centers, the Fed's term for brokering agencies. (Information about setting up and maintaining brokering units can be obtained from the National Center for Educational Brokering, in Washington, D.C.) Such information and counseling centers, by whatever name, are an extremely significant lifelong learning innovation; they can literally be the keys that open doors to new learning experiences, especially for people who have been away from school for some time.

(6) Involving volunteers. Lifelong learning programs should seek to engage volunteers in a variety of roles: classroom teaching, consulting both--academic and administrative, brokering work, and clerking and recordkeeping, for example. Retired people are an obvious pool to recruit from. In the aftermath of Proposition 13-type legislation there may conceivably be new incentives and new satisfactions from volunteering—from helping to provide essential public services. In consequence, there could develop new public attitudes about volunteerism in the United States. Involvement of volunteers will not only contribute to cost-effective programs, such a policy would provide opportunities for educationally rewarding use of time as well as an outlet for a generous motive that deserves to be supported.

(7) Tackling adult illiteracy. Now we're beginning to get utopian. Depending on how the definition, it can be said that the rate of illiteracy in America is shockingly high. Some experts, very responsible ones, put the rate as high as 20 percent. Many people interpret the decline in SAT scores as indicative of declining levels of literacy among young people. However, I'm not concerned so much here with declining SAT among the college-bound, or even the 20 percent who are said to be "functionally illiterate" or "incompetent"—a concept which I'm not yet persuaded is conceptually or operationally sound.

What I am concerned with is the smaller number of adult Americans who really cannot read or write at all. They fall into two general categories; native-born illiterates, and foreign born immigrants who speak no English. The latter group--all the people from Central and South America and Indochina, for example--are easier to work with; they are typically quite motivated, and usually quite able, to learn English. The native illiterates pose a much more difficult problem. They are not motivated; in fact most of them go to great lengths to hide the fact that they cannot read. Concerted efforts, so far on a small scale, are being made in many places in the U.S. The nationally-organized Literacy Volunteers ("Lit Vols") have been active for some years, and there is also a network of Literacy Councils, usually organized at the county level. We can learn from the successful literacy campaigns in foreign countries—in China in the early 1950's, in Cuba during Castro's early years, in Tanzania, and in England at the present time. The keys seem to be the principle of "each one teach one" and massive use of volunteers.

Reduction of illiteracy rates among people of all ages obviously must be a high priority for anyone interested in lifelong learning. Without literacy, existence in modern society is difficult at best, and lifelong learning is pretty much out of the question.

(8) Expanded roles for churches. We saw back in Table 1 that churches in America are already heavily involved in adult education and learning. We even have government statistics on the extent of adult education in the churches--from a 1972 survey by the National Center for Education Statistics.

What I want to argue here is that the churches are in a uniquely good position to sponsor adult education programs of the kind this country urgently needs. Some 60 percent of all American adults are church members; the task of attracting them to educational programs should be relatively easy. The churches have a tradition of extensive use of volunteers. Perhaps most important, church members are from all socioeconomic levels; their potential for doing something about the equity problem in adult education participation in this country is thus great indeed. Almost as important, it seems to me, is the potential role of the churches in campaigns against illiteracy.

To be sure, there are negative attitudes toward certain or all churches held by some people, as well as legal problems--by no means insurmountable--in churches receiving public funds for educational work. Yet the overwhelming fact remains: for hundreds of thousands of people the church is the single most preferred, most comfortable, setting outside the home for almost any organized activity.

(9) Facilitating independent learning. As I also pointed out earlier, the great majority of people in this country engage in

learning in an essentially independent manner. They find out how to do things by reading books, or by getting help from friends who have expertise, or they learn by means of electronic gadgets or through correspondence study.

In the learning society of our imagination, it should be easy, convenient, for people to engage in independent learning. Indeed there should be services designed expressly to facilitate such do-it-yourself learning. Many readers know about the 20 or so learning exchanges--now called "learning networks" — a seemingly genuine American educational invention for linking individuals who want to learn something with individuals in the community who are interested in teaching that something.

However, it is the libraries in this country--all 8,000 of them--that arguably should be the key facilitator of independent learning, which they have, of course, always attempted to be. The libraries should not be allowed to wither in a period of fiscal conservatism. Quite the opposite: their range of services should be expanded. They are out there--in the small towns and very small towns. They can be the pillars, all across the country, of the noninstitutional sector of the future learning society.

(10) Attending to unintentional learning. One really cannot call on academic professionals to try to do something about the condition of the settings in which most of the unintentional learning takes place--the family and the workplace, most particularly. There is enough to worry about just on the campus. However, at the least, we can all continuously be aware of some of the realities of unintentional learning,

and try to give support to people who are working on various fronts to try to improve the quality of family life, work life, and the mass media. For example, the White House Conference on the Family is cooking along this year--in more ways than one. It could be a forum for conceiving ways to make the home an improved instruments for constructive learning for people of all ages. As it is these days, parents, both of them, are out of the house more and more, and what little time they share with their kids is usually shared with the television set.

As for work, while there is a sprinkling of recent experiments on improving the "quality of work," there are few signs in the U.S. of broad concern about making employees' work lives more interesting or stimulating. Other countries, particularly ones with traditionally strong labor movements, have made advances. In this country one can see few reasons for optimism.

Commercial television and radio, which command the attention of so many Americans for so many hours in the day, are cultural disgraces. We need to give all the support we can to public TV and radio, both of which are expanding.

The fourth source of unintentional learning noted in Table 1 is friends and acquaintances, which, there is reason to believe, are increasing in importance as learning sources. This is happening as youth-parent ties weaken, as increasing numbers of middle-generation adults lead essentially single lives--the result of divorce or having never married--and, among the older generation, as spouses die. There ought to be activities that churches, Y's, and other community organizations

could sponsor that would, by design, facilitate mutual learning among friends.

The Community Lifelong Learning Council (CLLC) as an Organizational Instrument

The major policy suggestion in our book about lifelong learning was that Community Lifelong Learning Councils, or CLLC's, be set up in cities, towns, and regions to plan and coordinate the broad range of activities designed to meet the broad range of learning needs in the locality. Our contention was--is--that for lifelong learning programs to be maximally effective, they need to be created and operated in cooperation with the people who will be participating in them. Also, we could see little prospect in the near future for important new initiatives on behalf of adult learners from either the federal or state governments.

The proposed Council should have the support and cooperation of all the institutions in the community that conduct learning activities. Local schools and colleges should be members; so should cultural organizations, such as museums and performing arts groups; so also libraries, Y's, and ethnic organizations; also churches; the Red Cross, senior centers, and other social service organizations; also CETA, major industries, labor unions, and any nearby military installations.

To plan, a CLLC needs to engage in at least four types of activities. First, it should periodically conduct comprehensive analyses of community educational needs--the learning interests of all community residents, as well as area employment needs. Second, it should

inventory all available resources for education and learning that exist in the community. Third is to analyze the nature and extent of gaps between needs and resources. And the fourth is to broker, to negotiate, which organizations are to fill the gaps--meet the unmet needs. All of the steps should be accomplished in an open, participatory and cooperative way. CLLC leaders, needless to say, will need to be paragons of patience and good will.

You say that this kind of cooperation is virtually unheard of in the American education. Unfortunately I have to agree, although there are a few such cooperative councils: for example, the Council for the Advancement of Lifelong Learning, CALL, in upstate New York; the Kansas Association for Lifelong Learning (also KALL); the Compact for Lifelong Educational Opportunities, CLEO, covering the greater Philadelphia area; the Rochester Urbanarium; the Brooklyn Educational and Cultural Alliance (BECA); and the Community Congress of San Diego. Generally considered the most successful is the Adult Education Council of Metropolitan Denver.

Without some such mechanism for cooperation, the kind of aggressive competitiveness and turfmanship that we already see today is bound to grow more intense. The likelihood of fraud in the form of promises that cannot be delivered on becomes more probable. The prospects grow of states stepping in with <u>their</u> mechanisms to prevent duplication and fraud. The entire lifelong learning movement risks being discredited.

Conversely, Community Lifelong Learning Councils that are successful will not only be meeting learning needs in a rational way, they will attract funds from foundations and government agencies, and bring fame

to their founders. Entirely seriously, I am convinced that such community councils are quite necessary, and that the local college, as the major instrument for adult learning in the area, should take the lead in forming them.

Conclusions

In concluding, let me note again that many different kinds of organizations are already involved—have been involved for some time—in providing learning opportunities for Americans. For most of the non-school organizations, however, conducting educational programs is of secondary importance compared to their other activities. Not so for the colleges which, certainly at their best, are institutions for learning first and foremost. They should—indeed must—become the building blocks of the learning society.

Continuing education, when you look at it, somewhat resembles the old west. It is one of the last bastions for competitive free-enterprise in higher education in this country. Most college extension divisions, for example, are not yet subject to the strictures of statewide coordinating boards. This relative freedom can be both an advantage and a liability: an advantage in enabling relatively unfettered experimentation; and a liability in the potential for hucksterism and shoddy programs. We need innovation, of course; but we also need cooperation and responsibility.

There is so much that can be done. Any reader could add another ten issues to my list. Colleges are and will be called upon to function in new ways, such as serving older students, which will mean departures from familiar modes of operation. Difficult as that may be, they

ought not to just sit back and wait to be called upon; colleges should assume the leadership--for example, in forming community learning councils, in designing and operating literacy campaigns, and in working with other organizations in the community to help them advance their educational work.

The broad challenge is to push the country ever closer to a genuine learning society--a prospect that seems infinitely worth the effort.

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